

Message Text

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ACTION EA-14

INFO OCT-01 ISO-00 CIAE-00 DODE-00 PM-07 H-03 INR-10 L-03

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INFO CINCPAC HONOLULU HI

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CINCPAC FOR POLAD

E.O. 11652: N/A

TAGS: PINT, JA

SUBJECT: WHITHER SEIRANKAI

REFS: (A) TOKYO 5432 (B) FUKUOKA 072

SUMMARY: IN AFTERMATH OF RATIFICATION OF JAPAN-PRC CIVAIR AGREEMENT, SEIRANKAI RANKS HAVE BEEN THINNED BY WITHDRAWAL OF FIVE MEMBERS. GROUP ALSO WEAKENED BY DISUNITY AMONG LEADERS. HOWEVER, GROUP STILL HAS CAPACITY FOR INTERVENTION IN LDP DECISION-MAKING. END SUMMARY.

1. SEIRANKAI NUMBERS HAVE BEEN REDUCED BY WITHDRAWAL OF FIVE OF THIRTY ONE MEMBERS FOLLOWING VIGOROUS BUT UNSUCCESSFUL ATTEMPT TO BLOCK RATIFICATION OF JAPAN-PRC CIVAIR AGREEMENT. TAKU YAMAZAKI AND TAKESHI NODA (BOTH NAKASONE FACTION), WHO HAD EARLY BECOME DISENCHANTED WITH GROUP AND HAD NOT PARTICIPATED IN MEETINGS FOR SEVERAL MONTHS, BROKE PUBLICLY WITH SEIRANKAI MAY 9 (REF A). NEXT DAY TAMISUKE WATANUKI (SHIINA FACTION) ANNOUNCED QTE AMICABLE UNQTE WITHDRAWAL TO PRESS, OSTENSIBLY IN DEFERENCE TO PRESSURES FROM HIS CONSTITUENCY. TWO OTHERS, KOKAI NAKAMURA (SHIINA FACTION) AND HIDEO UTSUMI
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(FUNADA FACTION) HAVE ANNOUNCED THEIR INTENTION TO LEAVE GROUP.

2. UNITY OF SEIRANKAI HAS ALSO BEEN BADLY STRAINED BY INTRAMURAL DISAGREEMENTS OVER TACTICS OF OPPOSITION TO CIVAIR RATIFICATION. SERIOUS DISARRAY SURFACED WHEN VICE-MINISTERS MOTOHARU MORISHITA (NAKASONE FACTION) AND MASATOSHI KUSUNOKI (NO FACTION) PUBLICLY DENIED SEIRANKAI ANNOUNCEMENT THAT THEY WOULD RESIGN POSTS IN PROTEST AGAINST LDP HANDLING OF CIVAIR PACT (TOKYO 5432). FELLOW SEIRANKAI VICE-MINISTERS MICHIO WATANABE (NAKASONE FACTION) AND ICHIRO NAKAGAWA (MIZUTA FACTION), WHO DID OFFER TO RESIGN, WERE ULTIMATELY PERSUADED BY THEIR RESPECTIVE MINISTERS (AGRICULTURE AND FINANCE) TO WITHDRAW RESIGNATIONS. FAILURE OF LEADING MEMBERS TO PULL TOGETHER HAS ERODED MUTUAL TRUST, RECOVERY OF WHICH SEEMS CERTAIN TO BE INHIBITED BY WIDESPREAD REPORTS THAT FINANCIAL INDUCEMENTS OFFERED BY PRIMIN TANAKA TO CERTAIN PRINCIPALS INVOLVED HELPED PRODUCE BREAKDOWN OF UNITY.

3. CIVAIR PACT DEBATE BROUGHT INTO OPEN MORE DIFFICULT FUNDAMENTAL QUESTION WHICH SEIRANKAI HAS YET TO ANSWER, I.E., WHETHER TO CONTINUE AS RADICALS WITHIN LDP, OR TO ATTEMPT CREATION OF SEPARATE NEW CONSERVATIVE PARTY NUCLEUS OUTSIDE OF LDP. AT PRESENT DOMINANT VIEW REPRESENTED BY SEIRANKAI CHAIRMAN EIICHI NAKAO IS TO REMAIN IN FOLD AND NOT LOSE LEGITIMACY OFFERED BY CONTINUED LDP MEMBERSHIP.

4. INCREASE IN LDP OPTIMISM THAT PARTY WILL MAINTAIN UPPER HOUSE MAJORITY IN JULY 7 ELECTION ALSO CREATES PROBLEM FOR SEIRANKAI SINCE IT UNDERCUTS CENTRAL SEIRANKAI THESIS THAT PARTY DOOMED TO ELECTORAL DEFEAT UNDER CONTINUED LEADERSHIP OF PRIMIN TANAKA. IN ADDITION, OPTIMISTIC FORECASTS TEND TO STALL PRO-FUKUDA BANDWAGON NOW BEING PUSHED UPHILL BY SEIRANKAI.

5. COMMENT: FACT THAT FIVE MEMBERS HAVE TURNED BACKS ON SEIRANKAI IN RECENT WEEKS, DESPITE BLOOD OATH, INDICATES RATHER SERIOUS INTERNAL DISARRAY. IN EMBASSY VIEW, CIVAIR EPISODE REVEALED BOTH STRENGTH AND LIMITATIONS OF SEIRANKAI. ITS AGGRESSIVE SPOILING TACTICS ALMOST SUCCEEDED IN SABOTAGING CIVAIR RATIFICATION AND DID SUCCEED IN EMBARRASSING TANAKA-OHIRA LEADERSHIP. ON OTHER HAND, EPISODE ALSO REVEALED THAT LIMITED OFFICIAL USE

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SEIRANKAI NOT AS DISCIPLINED OR MONOLITHIC AS MANY OBSERVERS HAD TENDED TO BELIEVE. WE BELIEVE FURTHER THAT SEIRANKAI'S TRANSPARENT ATTEMPT TO USE CIVAIR ISSUE TO ATTACK GOJ/LDP LEADERSHIP HAS ALIENATED MANY LDP MEMBERS AND WEAKENED SEIRANKAI'S POSITION WITHIN PARTY. ON THORNY ISSUE OF RESTORATION OF JAPAN-TAIWAN AIR LINKS, WE EXPECT SEIRANKAI WILL PROBABLY CONTINUE TO SEEK EVERY OPPORTUNITY TO INFLUENCE DEVELOPMENTS. HOWEVER, BARRING ANY UNFORESEEN

DEVELOPMENTS, MOMENT SEEMS TO HAVE PASSED WHEN SEIRANKAI
MIGHT HAVE PLAYED LEADING ROLE IN UNSEATING PRIMIN TANAKA
TO BRING ABOUT MINFIN FUKUDA SUCCESSION. WITH ITS FLAWED
PRESTIGE AND DAMAGED UNITY, SEIRANKAI'S POTENTIAL AS RIGHT-
WING PRESSURE GROUP WITHIN LDP HAS BEEN CLEARLY DIMINISHED,
BUT IT STILL RETAINS SOME CAPACITY AS ACTIVIST FORCE TO PLAY
ROLE IN LDP DECISION-MAKING BY CONCENTRATED AGITATION FOR OR
AGAINST PARTICULAR ISSUES. END COMMENT.
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